

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM THE
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

To: Governor's Office of Planning and Research –
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth St, Suite 222
Sacramento, CA 95814-5502

From: South Coast Air Quality Management District
21865 Copley Drive
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

Project Title: Reclassification of the Coachella Valley for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone Standard and the Related SIP Elements Required to Update the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets

Project Location: The location of the proposed project is the portion of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) jurisdiction covering the federal nonattainment area known as the Coachella Valley, which consists of the Riverside County portion of the Salton Sea Air Basin, excluding tribal lands.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The proposed project has been developed to address statutory requirements related to transportation conformity to ensure that regional transportation plans, programs, and projects are consistent with or conform to a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for meeting the 2008 8-hour ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) of 0.075 parts per million (ppm) in the Coachella Valley. The South Coast AQMD is voluntarily requesting that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) reclassify the nonattainment status of the Coachella Valley from “severe-15” to “extreme” nonattainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS which, upon approval of the reclassification by U.S. EPA, will trigger a SIP revision to address “extreme” nonattainment area planning requirements. “Extreme” nonattainment will extend the attainment date for Coachella Valley from July 20, 2027, to as expeditiously as practicable, but no later than July 20, 2032. Supporting the request to change the Coachella Valley’s nonattainment status for the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS from “severe-15” to “extreme,” the proposed project also includes: 1) ozone air quality trends in the Coachella Valley; 2) baseline emissions inventory for: a) base year 2011, b) Reasonable Further Progress (RFP) demonstration for interim milestone years 2023, 2026, and 2029, and attainment year 2031; and 3) updated Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets.

Public Agency Approving Project:
South Coast Air Quality Management District

Agency Carrying Out Project:
South Coast Air Quality Management District

Exempt Status:

CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption

CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment

Reasons why project is exempt: South Coast AQMD, as Lead Agency, has reviewed the proposed project (Request to Reclassify Coachella Valley for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone Standard and the Updated Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets) pursuant to: 1) CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(k) – General Concepts, the three-step process for deciding which document to prepare for a project subject to CEQA; and 2) CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 – Review for Exemption, procedures for determining if a project is exempt from CEQA. Since the Coachella Valley is already in “extreme” nonattainment for the 1997 8-hour ozone standard, and the South Coast AQMD is also planning to request reclassification to “extreme” for the 2015 8-hour ozone standard, no adverse impacts are expected from the change in classification from “severe-15” to “extreme” nonattainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone standard. Thus, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed project may cause a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption. The proposed project is also categorically exempt because it is intended to further protect or enhance the environment pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment. Further, there is no substantial evidence indicating that any of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 – Exceptions apply to the proposed project.

Date of Project Approval: South Coast AQMD Governing Board Public Hearing: November 4, 2022

CEQA Contact Person: Farzaneh Khalaj, Ph.D.	Phone Number: (909) 396-3022	Email: fkhalaj@aqmd.gov	Fax: (909) 396-3982
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Proposed Project Contact Person: Eric Praske, Ph.D.	Phone Number: (909) 396-2948	Email: epraske@aqmd.gov	Fax: (909) 396-3982
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Date Received for Filing: _____

Signature: _____



November 4, 2022

Barbara Radlein
Program Supervisor, CEQA
Planning, Rule Development, and Implementation